

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 24, 1858.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. IVERSON submitted the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred the petition of Mary B. Renner, have had the subject under consideration and report :

That this claim is for the amount of twenty per cent. deducted from the aggregate of the original claim, presented to the 15th Congress, which allowed the claim, less the said twenty per cent. on the prices charged for the articles destroyed, and a small sum to cover the expenses of removing the same to and from a place of safety.

It appears that, during the war between the United States and Great Britain, the British forces took possession of Washington city, in August, 1814; that at the time Renner & Heath owned an extensive rope-walk in said city, at which they were manufacturing hemp, cordage, &c., for the United States; that they had a large quantity of materials on hand in their said rope-walk; that, in consequence of the act of the United States—(see Report H. R., No. 420, 15th Cong., 1st sess.)—they were prevented from removing their property to a place of safety, in consequence of which they suffered the loss of the same, it having been set on fire, together with the buildings, and destroyed, by order of the British commander. Shortly after the war, and during the 15th Congress, the parties presented their claim for indemnity. The whole amount of the claim, as then presented, was \$24,161, exclusive of the value of the buildings. The same was referred to the Committee of Claims of the House of Representatives, and a report made upon it by Mr. Lewis Williams, from that committee, and a bill passed at that Congress which allowed the amount of the claim for the articles destroyed, deducting the sum of \$4,953 40, which latter sum was intended by the committee and Congress to cover the expense of transporting the materials to a place of safety and back, damage done to the same thereby, and over charge in the prices claimed for the articles destroyed. The sum allowed and paid by that bill was \$19,813 60.

The claim for the balance of the property destroyed, including the buildings, has been several times, subsequent to 1815, presented to Congress and rejected or failed to pass, until the 32d Congress, when

a bill passed paying for the value of the buildings \$5,650, and for 1,750 pounds of twine, which was not included in the original account of property destroyed, and making the sum of \$6,744. The whole sum thus allowed to the parties amounts to \$26,547 60.

The present claim, as stated above, is for the twenty per cent. deducted by the committee of the 15th Congress, for over charge in price, cost of removal, &c. The same facts and evidence which are now presented were before the committee of the 15th Congress, who reported upon the claim and made the deduction of twenty per cent. aforesaid. This was in 1818, shortly after the transaction, and when it was more fully in the power of the committee to judge of the merits of the case and all the facts and evidence than can be done at this late day. With all the evidence before that committee and that Congress, which is now submitted, the committee considered the prices charged too high and made the deduction. At a subsequent Congress, in 1852, the Committee on Claims of the Senate made another report on this claim, and whilst the claim for the buildings and the twine was allowed, as before stated, the committee came to the conclusion as to the twenty per cent., that, at that distant day, the former action of Congress on that point ought not to be disturbed. In this conclusion your present committee concur; and as still further time has elapsed since the original decision of Congress on the point, your committee think it would be dangerous to open the case again. The proof produced in the case, both as to the quantity and quality of the materials destroyed, as well as the value thereof, is not of the strongest character, and the vagueness and weakness of the evidence as to the whole claim may well justify the committee in rejecting the present demand. The claimants have already been paid a very large proportion of their losses, as alleged by themselves; and considering that a considerable portion of it, especially for the buildings and the twine, rested upon a very slender foundation, and their payment was a large draft upon the liberality of Congress, your committee cannot agree to any further allowance. They therefore recommend that the petition be rejected.